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Chairman: Mr. TCHERING (Bhutan)

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AGENDA ITEM 105: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 105: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY (continued) (A/50/3, A/50/84-E/1995/12, A/50/114, A/50/156, A/50/163, A/50/181-E/1995/65, A/50/215-S/1995/475, A/50/254-S/1995/501, A/50/370, A/50/374, A/50/425-S/1995/787, A/50/454, A/50/473; A/CONF.166/9).

1. Mr. BARRETO (Peru) said that, during the past five years, his country had been carrying out a reform programme, a structural adjustment programme and a social support project with its own resources and with assistance from international financial institutions, the United Nations and bilateral donors. That effort, which was fully in keeping with many of the objectives agreed at the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development, sought to create real conditions for the overall development of the country on the basis of economic and social stability, guarantee minimum conditions for the development of individuals, families and communities and to carry out international agreements reached at the relevant United Nations conferences.

2. The structural reform programme, begun in 1990, included a range of measures to alleviate poverty, including social programmes for the most impoverished, active participation on the part of the target population groups, the allocation of greater resources for social expenditures and improved management of those resources. The Government had developed social investment projects designed to generate employment. By September 1995, 857,000 new jobs had been created; and projects had been launched in the fields of education, health care, institution-building and meeting food needs in poor urban and rural areas. The Government sought to respond to the most urgent needs of the population by providing essential services in those areas and building the necessary basic infrastructure.

3. As part of the strategy to alleviate poverty, the per capita social expenditure had increased between 1990 and 1994 by approximately 600 per cent. Peru's 1995 budget for meeting social needs was approximately twice as large as its 1994 budget in that area and the target agreed upon at the Copenhagen Summit. In general, $300 million had been allocated to primary health programmes; 4,000 health centres were being upgraded; the infant mortality rate had been reduced to a quarter of that for the period 1985-1990. Food aid had been provided to 3 million persons in need and 365 secondary schools had been constructed and equipped throughout the country.

4. Mr. TELLES RICEIRO (Brazil) said that the recent major United Nations conferences had demonstrated that the problems facing the international community in such areas as human rights, population, employment, hunger, education and health, must be dealt with through an integrated approach linking social and sustainable development. A country's capacity to satisfy the needs of its people depended on good social indicators, political stability, economic competitiveness and scientific and technological progress, not military strength. Greater emphasis should be placed within the United Nations on the issue of development, which was the key to shaping a civilized society.

5. His country had been directing its efforts and resources towards unemployment reduction, housing, health priorities and education. Government programmes in those fields had always taken into consideration the needs of the more deprived segments of society, with special attention to the needs of youth and families. In agriculture, plans for implementing an agrarian reform were being carried out with renewed vigour in order to reform land tenure and modernize production techniques. That, in turn, required more sophisticated labour, which called for training programmes and more emphasis on primary education.

6. There were specific programmes to better integrate the disabled and older persons into society, offering them a chance to improve their lives while contributing to the social well-being of their communities. Brazil's solidarity community programme, for example, sought to eradicate absolute poverty through a comprehensive approach, and lowering infant mortality and improving sanitation, sewerage and water treatment. By developing such pilot programmes and integrating them into existing projects which also benefited the disabled and older persons, Brazil hoped to improve the quality of life for all its people.

7. Mr. SEPELEV (Russian Federation) underscored the need to implement the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development (A/CONF.166/9), which reflected the needs of all groups of countries, including those with economies in transition. His Government had decided to establish a national body to assist in achieving the goals of the Declaration and Programme of Action in the Russian Federation and called on other States to expand cooperation in dealing with social problems. The Commission for Social Development should play a major role in carrying out the decisions taken at the World Summit and should be given comprehensive support. In that connection, however, he pointed out that any changes in the Commission's mandate should be made on the basis of current budget allocations and by reallocating existing resources. The United Nations specialized agencies should step up efforts to develop and implement specific programmes on the basis of the Declaration and Programme of Action.

8. In spite of the considerable difficulties facing it, the Russian Federation continued to attach priority to social questions and ensure observance of basic social rights in the belief that just and stable social development was a prerequisite for economic prosperity. At the initial stage in its reforms, his country's priorities had been to prevent massive unemployment, support socially vulnerable population groups and overcome unfavourable demographic trends. The first signs of economic improvement and stabilization were already evident. Priority was being given to structural reforms. Intensive privatization was under way, and the market economy was expanding. More active assistance by the world community in support of countries with transitional economies could increase the pace of their democratic reforms.

9. His delegation supported United Nations activities to increase the monitoring of the implementation of international plans and programmes of action, including the social development objectives laid down in the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, the Plan of Action on Ageing, the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

10. His delegation was participating in the preparation of the draft world programme of action for youth, and supported the International Plan of Action on Ageing and the observance of the International Year of Older Persons in 1999. The Russian Federation also supported the Organization's activities aimed at strengthening the role of the family and agreed on the need to draw up a declaration and a plan of action in that area.

11. Mr. Kwang-Jae LEE (Republic of Korea) stressed the need for a spirit of partnership between developed and developing countries in pursuing social development goals. While the main responsibility in that area rested with Governments, international assistance was needed to bolster the efforts of developing countries, especially in Africa and the least developed countries. Expanding trade and investments alone would not solve the urgent problems facing the developing world. Assistance by developed countries would ultimately benefit the donors themselves and thereby contribute to the socio-economic development of the world as a whole.

12. His Government was drawing up a master plan to expand its development support in accordance with its economic capability and to provide technical training to more than 30,000 people from developing countries by the year 2010. Social development efforts must focus in particular on women and children in developing countries, who were the primary victims of poverty and social injustice. Equal rights and opportunities for women in the areas of education, health and family planning were essential for genuine development. For that reason, the results of the recent Fourth World Conference on Women should be reflected in social development programmes. As its first follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, his Government had hosted, with the cooperation of the United Nations, the World Youth Leaders Conference in Seoul from 31 May to 2 June 1995. His country welcomed the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year at the current session of the General Assembly and the draft world programme of action for youth to the year 2000 and beyond to be adopted on that occasion. Those two initiatives should give further impetus to world-wide youth policies and programmes.

13. In the rapidly changing world, the strength and unity of the family were more vital than ever. The family, as the basic unit of society, played an indispensable nurturing role and should be fostered. It was also important to meet the needs of vulnerable groups, such as disabled persons, in social development. The adoption of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and the appointment of a Special Rapporteur to monitor their implementation constituted an important part of the United Nations disability programme.

14. Mr. MEKDAD (Syrian Arab Republic) said that social development was essential in order to combat poverty, ignorance and social disintegration and bring about a world governed by equality between people. If social and economic decline were to be averted, there was no alternative to cooperation between developed and developing countries. It was a mistake for the former to think that economic and technical assistance to the latter was not in their own interest, just as it was a mistake for the countries receiving such assistance to rely upon it, rather than depending principally on their own resources to

bring about social economic development. International cooperation should be based on mutual respect and community of interest.

15. Despite having to commit significant resources to defend its land and people against Israeli occupation and expansionism, Syria had achieved impressive results in the field of social development, and had been cited in the 1992 United Nations Human Development Report as one of the 10 leading nations in that respect.

16. In the past two decades, the Syrian Arab Republic had given development top priority. To that end, education had been made compulsory at the primary stage and free at all levels. Health care was free to all. Special attention was paid to all those with special needs. In accordance with the Standard Rules in General Assembly resolution 48/96, the Council of Ministers had passed legislation to equalize opportunities for persons with disabilities.

17. The development policies of his country had led to a rise in the standard of living of the majority, a country-wide increase in educational and health services and a fall in infant mortality. Social and economic development efforts were, however, considerably hampered by the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan, which had driven nearly half a million Syrians from their lands. That occupation constituted a flagrant violation of human rights. In all the territory it occupied in Palestine, South Lebanon and the Syrian Golan, Israel was seeking to eradicate national characteristics by destroying houses, expropriating land, splitting up families and spreading poverty and frustration.

18. The international community should increase pressure on Israel to return Arab land to its rightful owners. Israel's current policies were not conducive to a just and lasting peace. An end to military rivalry, foreign occupation and feelings of racial superiority would be conducive to a world free of poverty and injustice, in which relationships would become more democratic, humane and stable.

19. Mr. DONOKUSUMO (Indonesia) said that the international community's increased attention to its social agenda and to the linkage between economic and social development had been reflected at the World Summit for Social Development, where countries had affirmed that the most productive policies were those that empowered people to maximize their capacities, resources and opportunities.

20. In that connection, he reaffirmed Indonesia's support for the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. In Indonesia, under its national programme, the number of disabled people who had benefited from services had increased considerably. In addition, a number of organizations were working to improve the situation of the disabled in Indonesia. He welcomed the recommendations put forward in the report of the Special Rapporteur on monitoring the implementation of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (A/50/374). His delegation agreed that emphasis should be placed on advice, support and encouragement rather than on measuring, comparing and controlling, and that developing countries should be assisted in their implementation efforts.

21. Indonesia was also concerned about the situation of older persons, since it faced the prospect of an ageing population. Although the Government provided support to poor families to supplement the traditional family- and community-based approach to caring for older persons, it would have to consider further steps to accommodate the demographic transition. With respect to the programme for the International Year of Older Persons, to be observed in 1999, the preparation of studies on the integration of ageing into the development plans of countries in various socio-economic and demographic situations would be useful for the design of national policies.

22. As noted in the report on the struggle against illiteracy (A/50/181-E/1995/65), Indonesia had participated in the Education-for-All Summit of the Nine High-Population Countries in 1993, as one of the countries with a special responsibility for improving literacy statistics. It was therefore pleased that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had recognized the efforts of one of its national organizations to emphasize the importance of educating women and girls. Over the past two decades, Indonesia had reduced illiteracy by well over half in respect of both women and men, and was committed to further reductions. Such efforts helped people to acquire productive employment.

23. The draft framework for the 1997 Report on the World Social Situation (A/50/84-E/1995/12) should adequately reflect the interrelationship of the various social development issues. The final report should reflect the outcome and follow-up of the World Summit for Social Development and the conclusions of the other major United Nations conferences on social issues, as well as the need for coordinated follow-up of those conferences.

24. Miss MORGAN-MOSS (Panama), speaking on behalf of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, said that the recently established Central American Integration System included a programme to promote social development in those countries. The programme would build on past successes, such as those achieved through the education network for Central America and Panama (instituted as a component of the UNESCO Major Project on Education in Latin America and the Caribbean) in terms of literacy, training of education professionals, exchange of experiences and cooperation. Funding from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and cooperation agencies in North American and European countries had been of decisive importance.

25. The Central American and Panamanian Governments looked forward to the publication of the second report of UNESCO on the situation of education in the world. The first such report had categorically demonstrated the need for ongoing and special education and had guided education policies at the national level, particularly with respect to older persons and the disabled.

26. Important strides had also been made in Central America and Panama in the field of health, through the World Health Organization's Pan American Health Organization. Malaria, influenza and cholera had been controlled through programmes of early warning, prevention and treatment.

27. The presence of millions of land-mines in some Central American countries as a result of armed conflicts was increasing the number of disabled persons. The United Nations should strengthen its cooperation with non-governmental organizations in efforts to benefit the disabled and older persons. She hoped that the debates on the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development would encourage countries to take remedial measures commensurate with the seriousness of the social development problems they faced, and that the United Nations would devise appropriate methods and structures for implementing the decisions taken.

28. Mr. ELDEEB (Egypt) said that Governments, the international community and non-governmental organizations each had an individual role to play in implementing the Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development. His Government had already begun to adopt policies and programmes aimed at its implementation, notably concerning the eradication of poverty, in which connection he hoped that the international community would lend the necessary financial and other support. The interrelated issues of the family, children, women, youth, ageing and disabled persons and education were also directly linked to the comprehensive development of any society. Governments should identify the essential needs of all social categories and create a climate conducive to production, while the international community should implement the recommendations put forward by United Nations conferences in recent years, which called for the deployment of financial and technical resources.

29. His delegation wished to commend the report of the Secretary-General on observance of the International Year of the Family (A/50/370); as the basic unit of society, the family played an important role in social development. He asserted that men and women should have equal responsibilities and duties within the family, as well as equal work opportunities. Education was also a means of development. The developing countries were able to derive mutual benefit from sharing their often similar experiences of problems such as illiteracy. The International Literacy Year had highlighted the means of addressing that problem and the distinct role which the media, research institutions and non-governmental organizations could play. The General Assembly should call for a regular 10-year review of achievements in the struggle against illiteracy. In that connection he referred to his own Government's implementation of a literacy programme in conjunction with local authorities and voluntary organizations.

30. Egypt welcomed the Secretary-General's conceptual framework of a programme for the preparation and observance of the International Year of Older Persons in 1999 (A/50/114), which would highlight the social and health problems suffered by older persons, as well as means of alleviating such problems. Older persons had a leading socio-economic role to play, particularly in rural areas, and represented a wealth of experience from which Governments could benefit once the necessary channels were in place.

31. On the subject of youth, Egypt had participated in the discussions at the latest session of the Commission on Social Development, which had produced the draft programme of action for youth to the year 2000 and beyond. He hoped that the final draft would be ready for consideration by the General Assembly at its imminent high-level meetings with a view to its adoption on the occasion of the

tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year and the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations.

32. Egypt attached great importance to the rehabilitation and social integration of disabled persons, through the creation of equal opportunities in suitable education and work. Their marginalization conflicted with religious values and violated their human rights.

33. He concluded by noting that the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, would revive hopes of strengthening the international peace and security that were the foundation for social development in its widest sense for all peoples of the world.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.